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ABSTRACT

The Chicago (Illinois) School Reform Act of 1988 set in motion a chain of reform efforts that have been the subject of considerable study. The plan emphasizes returning control of the schools to parents and the community through school-based management and local school councils. This book reports on studies of the implementation of the reform effort, and shares successes and failures of many participants in trying to reshape an ineffective urban school system. Part 1 presents a detailed account of the implementation and outcomes of the Chicago reform effort, with a chronology and some case studies. Part 2 challenges local, state, and national policy and fundamental assumptions about urban schools and at-risk students. How to adapt traditional assumptions to result in school restructuring is explored. The radical initial efforts of the Chicago plan appear to be laying the groundwork for more ordinary, incremental change and restructuring. It is still too soon for the last word on the Chicago experience, but change is occurring. Appendix A discusses monitoring the reform effort, and Appendix B explores the financial aspects of the reform effort. (Contains 2 text tables, 7 tables and 5 figures in Appendix B, and 216 references.) (SLD)

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